

*Shakin' and Bakin' with Silly Hat Sam*

Carrie Scharmach, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Erie County and Marcia Scheideman, M.S., R.D., C.F.C.S., Regional Coordinator New York State Western Region, Cornell Cooperative Extension

Preschool children are the optimal audience for obesity prevention programming and low-income families are least likely to be exposed to accurate nutrition information. The "Shaking and Baking with Silly Hat Sam" program is designed for children aged 5 and under. Targeted schools and day care centers are located in low-income communities where 50% or more of the students are participating in the Free/reduced lunch program. Funding for this program was provided by Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program in New York State. Six interactive 40-minute lessons are presented to preschool children. They include four sessions presented by the Community Educator using a wrap around puppet named Silly Hat Sam. Germs Be Gone teaches the importance of hand washing; Eating a Rainbow focuses on eating five fruits and vegetables each day; From Cow to You introduces the switch to 1% or less dairy foods and the importance of drinking milk; and Breakfast Boogie emphasizes eating breakfast. The importance of being physically active and choosing healthy snacks are incorporated into the two teacher lead lessons used to support the program between visits from Silly Hat Sam. Children participate in preparing and eating healthy snacks, singing songs to learn nutrition education concepts and interacting with Silly Hat Sam as he pulls objects from his hats to teach the children. Since the beginning of this program in January 2002, over 1500 children have been reached. Both formative and summative evaluations provide positive feedback. Teachers and day care providers are continuing and reinforcing the lessons presented. A waiting list has been established and programming is continuing to date.